



December 10, 2018

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket 18-336 (Implementation of the Hotline Suicide Improvement Act of 2018)

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of Integral Care to support a new 3-digit number for mental health and suicide-related crisis calls. Integral Care, Travis County's Local Mental Health Authority, operates our community's 24/7 Crisis Helpline. The Helpline provides around-the-clock crisis support, connects callers to our programs and services and is accredited by the American Association of Suicidology. In FY2018, we answered 60,159 crisis calls for Travis County, a 20% increase from the previous year. Our Helpline staff also supports calls from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The need for mental health crisis support is great and continues to grow. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recently released data showing that the age-adjusted suicide rate increased 33% from 1999-2017. They also reported that over 40,000 Americans died by suicide last year – driving the national suicide rate to its highest rate in decades. In Travis County, we saw a 35% increase in deaths by suicide between 2011 and 2014. It is clear that suicide rates will not drop without additional support.

The National Action Alliance recently highlighted the low funding rates for suicide prevention efforts. "Compared to funding for other major public health issues, like HIV/AIDS and heart disease, funding for suicide lags in the U.S. – despite it being the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death." Allocating funds to establish new 3-digit access to crisis services will:

- Highlight national awareness that seeking help for mental health and suicidal crises is just as important as seeking help for fire, injury and other health needs.
- Expand access to life-saving crisis support services.

As crisis experts in Travis County, Integral Care and our 24/7 Crisis Helpline team are ready to support calls from a dedicated 3-digit number. On average, our Helpline connects people with mental health clinicians in 30 seconds or less, and makes follow-up calls to ensure the health and safety of callers. Integral Care's robust services and programs provides ongoing care for Helpline callers and the individuals we serve – from mobile crisis response teams that divert individuals from unnecessary emergency services to integrated mental and primary health care clinics that support health and well-being. We also connect Helpline callers to local resources, including 211, when appropriate.

Anyone can experience a mental health crisis. Integral Care works hard to ensure Travis County residents have access to immediate crisis support that is as barrier free as possible. A new 3-digit number will increase access to crisis care and offer one more life-saving crisis resource for our community and others across the country.

Sincerely,

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